



# IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Small Business Owners Encouraged to Apply for Popular Employee Health Insurance Program**

The Access to Health Insurance program quickly reached its cap of 1,000 slots reserved for premium assistance, but with two more weeks to go before the assistance is activated on July 1, the program is still encouraging additional applicants.

“We are pleased by the response,” says Senior Project Manager Patti Campbell. “But it’s important to point out that among the thousand applicants, it’s very likely some people may not be eligible and some businesses may decide not to go forward — that could create space for others. Our goal is to make sure that small businesses have as much opportunity as possible to get health insurance for their employees. That’s why it’s important that interested companies step forward now. We are processing applications in the order we receive them, so the sooner companies sign up, the more likely they will be able to participate.”

The Access to Health Insurance program provides premium assistance for employees of Idaho small businesses, as well as premium assistance for the employee’s dependents. Small business is defined for the program as a company that has 2-50 employees. The employer must agree to pay at least 50 percent of the adult premium costs. The state will pay up to \$100 per person per month for the employee’s share of the premium cost — a limit of \$500 per family per month.

The program is part of a legislative package passed three years ago by Idaho lawmakers in an effort to reduce the number of uninsured children and adults in Idaho. The Access to Health Insurance program is similar to the Access Card program for children that began last year because it allows people to secure their own health insurance policy for which the state will help pay the premiums.

More than 125 small businesses have registered employees for the program. Employee applications are being processed now to confirm that they meet income and other eligibility requirements. The next step is for the employer to make a decision to offer health coverage after obtaining the exact costs of insurance from an insurance representative.

Monique Zehner, owner of On the Fly, a Boise convenience store, registered for the coverage. “What a great deal for everybody. Right now, we have one employee who will participate and she’s thrilled. This is the kind of business with high turnover, so we want to make the job attractive for them. The health insurance helps.”

“Monique began the registration process early, but it’s not too late to get on board,” says Campbell. “We have a lot of people signed up, but we will likely have room for more. This is a great opportunity for small businesses.”

Employers interested in obtaining more information about the Adult Health Insurance program can call toll free at 1-866-326-2485; contact the Idaho Careline at 2-1-1; or go to this internet site: [www.accesstohealthinsurance.idaho.gov](http://www.accesstohealthinsurance.idaho.gov)

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**(Editors:** Interviews are available on request. Contact Ross Mason at 334-0693 for more information.)